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REMARKS

The Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the final rejection dated June 7, 2005.

Claims 12-22 remain pending.

Claims 12-18, 21, 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by "Aoki et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,421,675)" (sic, Aoki et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,078,913) (Aoki). The Applicants traverse as follows.

In rejecting Claim 12 over Aoki, the Examiner finds the claimed user's evaluation input step in a purported user selection of a desired document by using a bookmark, citing Column 6, lines 35-51 of the patent. The Examiner also asserts that Aoki teaches that a user's evaluation of a document is input by designating a document retrieved in a document search conducted pursuant to a search condition, citing the frequency table of keywords in Column 6, lines 1-51 (particularly lines 1-6).

Respectfully, the Applicants submit that the Examiner misunderstands either the claimed step or the disclosure of Aoki. According to the claimed step, now more particularly characterized by clarifying amendments, the step inputs a user's evaluation of a document retrieved in a document search conducted pursuant to a search query, the evaluation including

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an evaluation as to whether the document is desirable for the
user's search purpose.   Thus, the user determines whether the
document is desirable, and this determination, or evaluation,
is input according to the step.

On the other hand, Column 6, lines 35-51 of Aoki does not
disclose or relate to a user's evaluation of a document.
Rather, the paragraph spanning lines 35-51 describes that a
user information database includes, for each user, a plurality
of URLs and Bookmarks which interest the user, and that a
newly-found document indicated by the specific URLs and
Bookmarks is updated and posted to the specific user.
Therefore, while the Bookmarks reflect the interest of the
user, the document is found and posted by the search system.
The user does not perform an evaluation; rather, the system
shows the document to the user as being of potential interest.

The remainder of Column 6, between lines 1 and 51
describes fundamental features of the cluster database 122.
The database includes a frequency table of keywords listing
keywords for weighting documents based on degree of
similarity. A user identifier list stores user identifiers to
be posted when documents positioned in a lower layer of a
current node are individually updated. A pointer indicates
the parent node and the child node to implement the clustering

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of documents in a hierarchical tree structure. As discussed

above, the user information database 21 stores original

information for each user, including URLs and Bookmarks which

interest the user.

Therefore, Column 6, lines 1-51 does not support the

assertion that Aoki teaches a step for inputting a user's

evaluation of a document by designating a document retrieved

in a document search conducted pursuant to a search condition.

Claim 12 further recites a search query storage step for,

when updating the search query based on the evaluation,

storing a search query after the update in association with

the retrieval operation thereof. Against this feature of the

invention, the Examiner cites Aoki at Column 5, lines 62-67

and Column 7, line 36. The passage in Column 5, however,

merely notes cluster database 122, including a plurality of

node information elements N which form nodal points of

hierarchical tree structure. Aoki teaches that the Node

information elements N each contain a frequency table 12 and

contents for each node, a user identifier list, and pointers

indicating parent and child nodes. These features have been

discussed above. None of these features, however, refer to

search queries.

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Similarly, Column 7, line 36 discloses that any update of a document x is posted to the user corresponding to the user identifier in the user identifier list in the node information element Nx, such that all users interested in the document can be informed of the update of the document x. Again, there is no suggestion of a user evaluation; rather, Aoki "pushes" a document of potential interest to the user based on stored similarities of other documents. Therefore, Aoki does not teach or fairly suggest a search query storage step for storing a search query after an update based on a user's evaluation.

Claim 12 further recites a storage result stored step for storing a search result based on the search query after the update in addition to search results that have been stored in previous retrieval operations conducted before the update. The claimed search history storage step stores information on the history of the search queries in each stored in the search query storage step, information on a history of search results each stored in the search results step, and each user evaluation and identifier of documents subjected to the evaluations by making a correspondence among the search query, the search result, the user's evaluation, and the identifier of the document subjected to the user's evaluation.

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The Examiner refers to Column 5, lines 13-34 of Aoki to
support the rejection of these features. This passage,
however, simply introduces the hardware and software structure
of Aoki, and fails to indicate user's evaluations, identifiers
of documents subjected to user's evaluations, or any
correspondence or value ascribed among the search query,
search result, user's evaluation, and identifier of documents
subjected to the user's evaluation.

In summary, Aoki is, respectfully, only marginally
relevant to the invention claimed in Claim 12, and cannot
support a patentability rejection under §102.

By similar argument, the system of independent Claim 21
and the computer-readable recording medium of independent
Claim 22 are patentable over Aoki.

In light of the foregoing arguments regarding the
independent claims, the patentability of dependent Claims 13-
18 should be evident. In particular, because Aoki does not
disclose a user evaluation as set forth in the claims, all
claims relying on such an evaluation are necessarily
distinguishable from Aoki.

Claims 19-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as
being unpatentable over Aoki in view of Diamond et al., U.S.
6,269,368 (Diamond). Diamond, however, teaches that

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individual scores are combined to obtain a score of a search

result document. Diamond does not disclose the input of a

user's evaluation of a document retrieved as a result of a

search. Thus, even in combination with Aoki, Diamond does not

render obvious the invention claimed in Claims 19-20.

In summary, the present invention, as claimed in Claims

12-22, is patentable over Aoki, whether taken individually or

in combination with Diamond. More particularly, whereas the

invention is directed to a document retrieval process

performed a plurality of times by the user, Aoki's process is

a recursive retrieval process performed on a tree structure by

the system. In the inventive process, the retrieval process

is conducted with a search query updated by the user so as to

obtain a more desirable search report, but the Aoki process is

performed to add documents of potential interest for review by

the user.

Aoki does not disclose a user's evaluation as a feature

of the process or system disclosed in the patent, whereas in

the present invention, the user's evaluation is integral to

the document retrieval.

In Aoki, keywords are indexed for comparison with newly-

discovered documents, to determine whether the documents might

be of potential interest to the user, whereas in the

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invention, search queries and updates thereof based on user's

evaluation constitute stored information used in the document

retrieval process.   Thus, whereas Aoki updates by adding

documents and modifying indexed contents thereof, the

invention is directed to updating search queries based on a
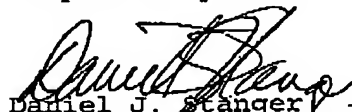
user's evaluation.

Ultimately, Aoki links together similar documents using

nodes, whereas the present invention utilizes search queries

and updates thereof based on user's evaluations, managed as

history information, to improve the document retrieval

results.   As an advantage of this feature of the invention,

the search history can be re-entered or re-used at a selected

point in time to optimize the document retrieval.

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In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks the

Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection and

allowance of the claims.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel J. Stanger
Registration No. 62,846
Attorney for Applicant(s)

MATTINGLY, STANGER, MALUR & BRUNDIDGE, P.C.
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 370
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Telephone: (703) 684-1120
Facsimile: (703) 684-1157
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